

before you make your mind up, i gotta ask by littlereddress

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Summary:

as far as sixteen year old girls go, she's always been practical, but when she fell through a tree and discovered that her stupid little brother might be right, well, the only accurate wording was probably bullshit.

(that's even before the bat with the nails and the bear trap and the girl with the shaved head that mike is obviously so in love with, and jonathan beyers making her heart flip in her stomach.)

before you make your mind up, i gotta ask

Author's Note:

i do love steve, but JANCY. also, major kudos to kane brown for lyrics.

you say what if I hurt you, what if I leave you,
what if I find somebody else and I don't need you,
what if this goes south, what if I mess you up,
you say what if I break your heart in two then,
what well I hear you girl, I feel you girl
but not so fast, before you make your mind up I gotta ask

x

as far as sixteen year old girls go, she's always been practical, but when she fell through a tree and discovered that her stupid little brother might be right, well, the only accurate wording was probably *bullshit*.

(that's even before the bat with the nails and the bear trap and the girl with the shaved head that mike is obviously so in love with, and jonathan beyers making her heart flip in her stomach.)

x

nancy always wanted to be the girl that steve liked. every girl did, but he noticed her. liked her doe eyes and her lanky legs and her inability to use incorrect grammar and his arm over her chair at the lunch table and his mouth on hers in the hallway with her heart pounding like a hummingbird with the taste of him into the last period was everything everything everything,

until her name was on a multiplex board attached to the word *slut* and her best friend was missing and she was riding shotgun in the

town freak's car. but, the town freak has a name.

jonathan. (and *goddamn* it if his cheekbones can't cut glass.)

x

it's not even the demagorgan that scares her the most. or the girl with the telekinetic powers. or joyce beyer's house with the Christmas lights haphazardly swaying in the late fall wind. it's the fact that despite it all, even with steve's fist in jonathan's mouth and jonathan's grazed forehead with an icepack, he still comes back for her like some fucking bullshit artist hero with great hair and member's only jacket and that swagger and smile and an apology to boot and she just melts. he's still steve Harrington and he's still choosing nancy wheeler. and it really seems as simple as that.

(but it's not because he didn't let her sleep with the lights on or get arrested defending her honor or cradled her little brother like the world would end on his account and jonathan would still be standing there holding the fort even though his hands were shaking.

so she waits for exactly 32 days.

it's the only time she's ever used mistletoe and she doesn't even get a kiss back.)

x

so she goes and goes and goes and exists and exists and exists.

and it sounds shitty because nancy does like steve. he's a bit of a fuck up and a little dumb and she worries about him being stuck in hawkins on her account. he's a good boy and he will be a good man but what if he's not it.

(because her heart still hums when jonathan walks her to her locker and drops will off at the house, waving from the safe distance of his car. because he still reads alone at lunch and then leaves the books outside her last period class with the pages he liked dog-eared for her. because his scars match hers. because he still looks at her like she hung the moon when really he did.)

and then Halloween happens and she isn't really sure but she wakes up with punch all over her satin blouse and steve is yelling at her in the alley behind the courts and all she can hear is the rumble of jonathan's car anyway so why does it matter in the grand scheme of things really.

x

it's the park and then the lab when she realizes how bruised her hands are. and his wrists are rimmed in crimson loops and all she can hear through the glass is him saying her name like a prayer.

(nancy has never much been one for church but if jonathan kept saying her name like that, she might change her mind.)

x

the gate makes her knees weak because she knows that this isn't something that she can fix with a shotgun and a bear trap and in a flash she thinks of mike and wonders if eleven is stuck in that black hole calling his name, anguish trapped in her ribcage. she leans into jonathan instinctively and feels his fingers grasp at the hem of her sweater teasing the skin of her stomach making her bones rattle with anticipation. his breath hot on the column of her and neck and all she can think is how much she wants this for mike.

(nancy hasn't told her baby brother but the rattle of the radio is loud and crackly but not as loud as his strained voice. it weighs heavy on her heart.)

x

they run don't walk out of the lab with him dragging her casting backwards glances and she can see the trauma in the stitch of his eyebrows.

he's silent all the way to the city, never once looking at her for more than a few seconds, hands stark white at the knuckles the entire drive only relaxing a bit once they past the city limits.

the motel is déjà vu all over again: quiet confessions and scarred whispers under covers and darkness and she can see his

disappointment in her when he says steve's name and she instantly regrets everything the moment that his voice breaks:

yeah for like a month.

it knocks the wind out of her, shame violent in her face.

x

bauman is the dictionary definition of creep. but fuck all if he gets the truth into the world. so nancy does nancy best and reasons with him and after six shots of vodka, they finally get somewhere. and then, just, fucking *implosion*.

x

we're just friends, and she can hear both of them trip over the word like it's four lettered and taboo as laughter spills from the mouth of their host. jonathan's adam apple bobs in his throat, nancy's hands erratically fidget.

you've told me a lot of shockers today, but that, that is the first lie.

it's not a lie. and it tastes like one on her tongue.

no? you're both young, attractive, you've got chemistry, history, plus the real shit, shared trauma, he continues and then zeroes in on jonathan: *trust issues, am I right? something to do with your dad*, grinning from ear to ear like he just won the goddamn lottery.

jonathan's words get stuck in his throat, bumbling and stuttering so she answers for him without thinking and immediately regrets it when bauman relocates to her. *you, you're harder to read. probably afraid like everyone of what would happen if you accepted yourself for who you are and retreated back to the safety of—*and then he looks at jonathan again and nancy feels herself rise off the couch because if he says

steve, jonathan supplies, and while it's not a venomous delivery the fact that he won't look her in the eyes tells her that tonight will end one of two ways and both have consequences that are more terrifying than going into that goddamn gate without eleven.

we like steve. but we don't love steve.

check. mate.

there it is the second lie of the evening.

my goodness, you two are adorable. she forgets how to breathe at that and she is wildly aware of every freckle on jonathan's collarbone, the slope of his wrists and how his fingers might feel fisted in her curls.

(but then he delivers a challenge that she's avoided for a year because the dare itself is more dangerous than daybreak and college and losing her virginity in steve's bedroom:

listen, there's a pullout sofa in my study if you want it, but if I were you, I'd cut the bullshit and share the damn bed.)

x

(she isn't sure if they meet in the middle with their bullshit but it's not the part that matters most.)

x

when he finally kisses her, it's horrifying. the world ends and empires crumble and his laugh into her mouth is akin to the way that fireworks look, like you could never hold one in the palm of your hands. she is bloodied pulp and completely surrenders with her hands on his neck and his lips spelling the chorus of something she thought that she might never hear.

(it is never ever like this, she thought.

it is now though.)

x

when his arms travel down skip of her hips and play firelight on her legs and the world burns behind her eyelids and the rest of the universe is screaming out there for mike and eleven and the gate and will, all she can repeat and gasp over and over again is something she heard once and didn't understand really until jonathan beyers was

wearing handcuffs and the collar of her jacket was crooked, ponytail uneven, and a scratch on his cheek looked like rumpled bedsheets

only love makes you that crazy sweetheart and that damn stupid.

she craved jonathan before she ever tasted him and that kind of yearning will either end in blood or salt—all in.

nancy is sixteen; she's not an idiot, but if this isn't what's always been written about, then she doesn't know what is.

x

what if I was made for you and you were made for me what if this is it,

what if it's meant to be what if I ain't one of them fools just playin' some game,

what if I just pulled you close, what if I leaned in,

then the stars line up.